The objective of this magazine is to present the output of some of the Master’s programmes supported by Norad’s Programme for Master Studies (NOMA) during the first programme period 2006–2010.

At present, 28 institutions are involved as main partners in the South and 13 in Norway. The total NOMA portfolio consists of 46 projects; 26 in Africa, 17 in Asia, two in Latin America and one in the Palestinian territories.

The overall aim of NOMA is to contribute to the education of staff in all sectors in eligible countries through building capacity at Master’s level at higher education institutions in the South. The success and impact of NOMA in a long-term perspective will eventually be judged by its ability to develop relevant expertise and capacity at the institutions in the South as outlined in the objectives contained in the NOMA Programme Document. This magazine will provide glimpses of some of the immediate effects and results of the NOMA cooperation by introducing you to students, project coordinators and others who are involved in the scheme.

In 2009 the first intake of NOMA students graduated, ready to make use of their new knowledge and qualifications. While many graduates have returned to their previous work environment, others have opted for new employment opportunities.

NOMA was launched in 2006. It replaced the former Norad Fellowship Programme (NFP). In NFP students from the South obtained their degrees from Norwegian institutions. NOMA provides support to establish and run Master’s degree programmes in the South in close cooperation with institutions in Norway. As such, NOMA represents a major change from its predecessor, shifting the educational activities from Norway to the South.

NOMA is funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and its administration is the responsibility of the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU). The first NOMA agreement was signed by Norad and SIU in 2006 with a total budget framework of NOK 180 million for the programme period 2006–2010. An addendum to this agreement was signed by the parties in November 2008, extending the NOMA programme period 2006–2010. An addendum to this agreement was signed by the parties in November 2008, extending the NOMA programme period 2006–2010.

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First NOMA students graduate from Alexandria

AMAL W Habibi

Eight students have obtained the first ever Master’s degrees in International Transportation and Logistics as part of the NOMA project at the Arab Academy in Alexandria.

On the shores of Alexandria, or more precisely on the shores of San Stefano, lies Four Seasons, one of Egypt’s most luxurious hotels. Inside one of the ballrooms at the elegant hotel 120 students were preparing for their graduation party.

Eight of them were students from African countries, getting ready to gain the first ever Master’s Degree in International Transport and Logistics as part of the ongoing NOMA project.

Elegant and traditional

Relatives of the graduates were sitting in the elegant and fashionable ballroom, waiting for the formal graduation of their sons and daughters.

During the glamorous celebration Vice Chancellor Sorifrd Vatne
said in her speech that she appreciated the cooperation with the Arab Academy and University of Dar es Salaam. The President of the Arab Academy chose to give his speech in English, “out of respect for our Norwegian guests”. He also praised the cooperation with Molde and congratulated the students, at the same time highlighting the important role and the achievement of the Arab Academy as an academic institution.

An hour later all the students were formally graduated.

Ready to make a difference

Just some hundred meters away from the shores of Alexandria, at Miami, lays the old building of the Arab Academy for Maritime Transport. It is in this building that the eight NOMA students have spent their last two years.

Miss Negoud Ali Mohamed (29) is from Sudan. She works at the Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities and has a Bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Neelain in Sudan.

When Miss Mohamed flies back to Khartoum with her Master’s degree in her bag she will be leading a project at her place of work.

“Logistics is very important in a world where efficiency and waste reduction, meaning the minimising of anything that could increase the cost, might be the only way to ensure competitiveness,” she says.

Any company or economic entity must base its activity on well planned logistics in order to be able to compete in a globalised world, she emphasises. Her thesis “Application of Lean and Agile Logistics on Fast Consumer Goods” is a case study of Nestlé. She believes she will use everything she has learned in her practical life when she herself heads the project in her workplace.

Must invest in logistics

Mrs Mercy Kiomi Jalazi (34) comes from Malawi. She has a Bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Malawi and works at the Ministry of Transport and Public Works, where she is a Senior Transport Planning Officer.

For her, logistics plays a major role in a globalised world and will enable countries to open up to the global economy. In her thesis she tries to establish how the railways could be reformed in a way that reduces the cost of transport in Malawi.

“In order for Malawi to become competitive, the country must invest in logistics and transport. Especially since Malawi is landlocked. Being surrounded by other countries, the transportation costs are high. The challenge is to find solutions to cut expenses and minimise waste,” she states.

Hopes for further study

Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Golicha (41) comes from Kenya. He is married, has two children, and says the most difficult part of studying in Alexandria is being away from his family.

He has a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Nairobi. Mr Golicha is the only one of the four students who had already obtained a Diploma in International Transport and Logistics at the Arab Academy.

He works at Kenya Port Authority in Mombasa and is looking forward to using his knowledge in the field of logistics in his work. The Kenyan ports are still run in a very traditional manner. Mr Golicha's thesis focuses on modernising the logistics in the Mombasa ports, and he hopes he will contribute to the reform of the Kenyan ports. “Ports play a vast role in international trade. A port must not contribute to the costs. Therefore logistics is vital in the operation of ports around the world,” Mr Golicha says.

Private and Public

Mr Cosmas Kampwali (37) from Zambia has a Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Zambia. In Zambia he works for the Ministry of Communications and Transport.

He chose to study logistics out of complete conviction that logistics is the engine of any economy in any country.
One man’s dream

Since its establishment by the Arab League in 1972, the Arab Academy has been a centre of knowledge in the field of maritime transport in the Middle East and Africa.

One man, Professor Ahmed Abdel Monsel, had his own dream of establishing logistics as a field of study. At the Academy he is referred to as the godfather of logistics in Egypt.

“I understood very early that logistics would become one of the most vital fields of study in a world which was getting more and more globalised,” Dr Abdel Monsel says.

In the early 1990s he started to search for a partner to establish a course in logistics.

“In 1994 we started cooperating with the Norwegian School of Management in Norway and established a Diploma, a seven-month course in logistics financed by Norad,” he says.

That lead to the fulfillment of Dr Abdel Monsel’s dream, and the following year, the Arab Academy established an undergraduate course in the field of International Transport and Logistics.

Further on

The coordinator of the NOMA project at the Arab Academy, Dr Farouk Mohamed, is very proud when he talks about the Diploma programme.

I understood very early that logistics would become one of the most vital fields of study.

“In 2009 the Diploma was developed into a Master’s degree in cooperation with Molde University College and the University of Dar es Salaam, still financed by Norad.”

Witnessing the graduation of the eight very first students in the NOMA project, he is not only happy for and proud of the cooperation, he also hopes the partnership will continue and develop even further.

“The cooperation is now working perfectly, and I think it could be beneficial to both parties to cooperate in the field of research,” he says. “We already have three Egyptian students at Molde, and we have offered the academy one scholarship for a female PhD student.”

Common interests

Vice Chancellor Dr Sofrid Valne has, during her stay in Alexandria, said meetings with the partners at the Academy.

“The cooperation is now working perfectly, and I think it could be beneficial to both parties to cooperate in the field of research,” she says. “We already have three Egyptian students at Molde, and we have offered the academy one scholarship for a female PhD student.”

She says that the Arab Academy conducts research on what is called “disaster logistics.”

“I believe this is one field of research that could be interesting for some of our researchers, as could the Academy’s research on sustainable energy,” she says.

She says she will discuss the possibilities for cooperation between Molde University College, the Arab Academy and Dar es Salaam when she is back home. The Academy, she says, has special expertise in the field of port logistics, which could also be of interest.
As the severity of the flood catastrophe in Pakistan became clear, former NOMA students in the country immediately gathered and participated in the affected areas to help provide food and water for remote villages.

NOMA students help flood victims in Pakistan

**NOMA**

**MEDICAL CAMP**/Former NOMA students helped set up a medical camp in the flood-affected areas in the north of Pakistan.

They were helped in their efforts by the training and skills they had obtained as students in water, sanitation and health studies at the University of Life Sciences (UMB) and the partner institution COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) in Pakistan. As Associate Professor Ingrid Nyborg at UMB explains: "These newly educated students contribute with everything they know about flood waters, soil contamination and purification processes, health risks and development challenges."

UMB has been engaged in research and education in Pakistan for many years and has many partners in the flood-affected areas. A NOMA project on Sustainable Water, Sanitation, Health and Development has recently seen 22 Pakistani Master's degree students graduate with knowledge on sustainable approaches to water and sanitation in rural areas of north-west Pakistan.

Water and sanitation

The students have been recruited by COMSATS in the current relief efforts. A follow-up plan after the floods recede is being made to address sustainable water and sanitary systems, and UMB is supporting COMSATS' efforts in this time of need.

"Our students and teachers in Pakistan are actively working in the crisis areas and are using the knowledge they obtained in collaboration with UMB to find solutions both in the short and long term," says Professor Petter Jensen, who is the Norwegian coordinator of the NOMA project.

UMB has been working on water and sanitation in developing countries for a long time. The NOMA project runs simultaneously in Pakistan and Nepal. There is also a similar programme at UMB: Students not only learn about engineering techniques but also social studies and health.

"The reason why many projects fail is that the chosen technology is unsuitable for the local setting. It is important to offer technology that is accepted and maintained locally and that is environmentally and economically sustainable. This is the NOMA project's main strategy. Combining engineering techniques with social economics, agronomy and knowledge on health and development is the key to greater success in international aid and development projects."

Natural systems

According to Professor Jenssen, this programme focuses on solutions and expertise often lacking in Western engineering training.

"In general, you can to a larger extent use so-called "natural systems" in a country like Pakistan. For example, we are creating a simple purification system in the north of the country. Toilets using little water are connected through short pipes to a "constructed wetland". This is a shallow pool filled with local gravel and wetland plants. When the wastewater flows through the planted gravel bed it is purified and leaves the wetland as a clear and odourless liquid that is rich in plant nutrients such as phosphorus, nitrogen and potassium. This liquid is used to irrigate and fertilise farm fields," Professor Jenssen explains.

Professor Jenssen and Associate Professor Ingrid Nyborg travel to Nepal and Pakistan to teach certain courses in the NOMA project, while their Pakistani and Nepalese colleagues do the rest of the teaching. The students also come to Norway for a short period during their studies.

"Academically it is very inspiring. The students are incredibly motivated, and I always look forward to the trips to Nepal and Pakistan to teach, as well as when the students come to stay at UMB. What is frustrating is the bureaucracy. We need more assistance to deal with that part," Jenssen says.

Making a difference

UMB's goal is to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation and to reduce poverty. UMB also wants to offer its expertise in order to be able to help in acute situations.

"Regarding the matter of sanitation, we are far from reaching the Millennium Goal on halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015 since there will still be 2.5 billion people without acceptable sanitary conditions, the same number as in 2000."

"There is a great need in the coming years for expertise on solutions that are adaptable to local needs and that are maintained locally if we are to improve water, sanitary and health conditions for an increased world population," says Jenssen.

**Facts**

**Title:** Master's programme in Sustainable Water and Sanitation, Health and Development. **Partners:** University of Life Sciences (UMB), Norway, Tribhuvan University (TRIBH), Nepal and COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), Pakistan. **Subject areas:** Environmental sciences, public health, and other social sciences. **Project period:** 2007-2013.
Against Hunger, Save the Children and Human Development Society. Almost all of the other students in our class are also working in the affected area of Swat.

Four of these NOMA students have now joined the same programme as faculty members and researchers. Shams Ali Baig is working as a public health officer with Oxfam GB in the flood-relief programme as faculty members and researchers. Shams Ali Baig, Ms Ayesha Anwaar Qazi and Mr Shams Ali Baig.

The autumn 2008 class of the NOMA-funded Master's programme in Sustainable Water and Sanitation, Health and Development counted a total of 21 students, out of which five were NOMA-sponsored students and 10 were sponsored by COMSATS. The five NOMA students were Mr Adeel Malik, Mr Awais Arifeen, Ms Abda Khalid, Ms Ayesha Anwaar Qazi and Mr Shams Ali Baig.

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Former NOMA student Mr Adeel Malik replied on behalf of five NOMA students via e-mail to questions concerning the students’ involvement in the relief work in Pakistan:

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Fund raising

How have you participated in the relief work?

All the NOMA students actively participated in the flood relief work. Our activities were planned over three distinct stages:

1. Fund raising
2. Emergency relief
3. Rehabilitation-adoption of a flood-affected village (which will also be a research centre for students and faculty within the programme)

During the fundraising campaign students helped raise funds for COMSATS’ flood relief campaign from relatives, community, organisations and other donors, which amounted to 2.25 million Pakistan Rupees (USD 26 300).

In the emergency relief efforts all the NOMA students participated in the distribution of food parcels, clothes and shoes, and personal female items. A specialised medical camp was set up consisting of specialist doctors and general physicians. All relief efforts were carried out in areas that required the most attention and where no other relief activities had been carried out. We are currently involved in the emergency relief phase and plan to start the rehabilitation phase in the near future.

Have you been able to put to use the knowledge gained during your Master’s degree? If so, in what way?

Yes, the knowledge we gained through our course was quite helpful in the planning and execution of all of our relief activities. In the rehabilitation stage of our flood relief activities, relating to the provision of sustainable water and sanitation facilities to affected villages, we will be able to use our knowledge and expertise gained through our course.

We suggest culturally acceptable, appropriate solutions related to the implementation of sustainable water and sanitation.

Currently we are working on developing sand filters for drinking water. Those working in the field with NGOs are effectively using the knowledge gained from the programme. Shams Ali Baig is currently working on a pilot project to introduce the concept of ecological sanitation for the first time in Pakistan.

Inflation

Has the flood impacted on your life? If so, in what way?

Generally the flood has not directly affected our area, or us, but indirectly the whole country is affected in terms of extreme inflation in prices due to severe loss of agriculture land and livestock.

Multidimensional

Why did you apply for this programme?

Most of the NOMA students opted for this programme mindful of the dire situation of water and sanitation in Pakistan. The course being very multidimensional and interdisciplinary, everyone saw a chance to address the sanitation issue from his or her own perspective. For students who want to work in development, there could not be a programme that addresses a development issue in so many different contexts.

Finally, one of the most attractive features of the programme was collaborating with other international universities, such as the University of Life Sciences in Norway. Through this collaboration we could benefit from faculty and student exchange and we were exposed to some systems that have not yet been implemented in Pakistan.

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Finally, one of the most attractive features of the programme was collaborating with other international universities, such as the University of Life Sciences in Norway. Through this collaboration we could benefit from faculty and student exchange and we were exposed to some systems that have not yet been implemented in Pakistan.
The new Master’s degrees that have been established, giving has been the most important achievements? If you look at the positive aspects of NOMA, what would you say A critical mass incentives for individuals and institutions, making it financially challenge is how to do this and at the same time include sufficient previous Norad Fellowship Programme, is the right move. The institutions rather than individuals, which was the case with the merit. But I believe that supporting sustainable degrees and be met by the programme. The hard work behind the successes number of people receiving Master’s degrees, instances where NUFU and NOMA have complemented each other, sandwich programmes, exchanges of students and staff and partnerships on equal terms. A good aspect of NOMA is that we can relate it to the developing countries’ needs, be it in terms of health, energy or other areas. The goal of NOMA is not only to educate researchers for academia, but also to contribute to getting a well educated workforce, a critical mass.”

Success cannot always be measured only by the establishment of new degrees.

Is the lack of flexibility the biggest disadvantage of the programme? “Yes, and also the financial part. We have learnt that some countries may need to strengthen the institutions themselves, while others need Bachelor’s degrees, some need PhDs, and others need postdocs. But sometimes we need to realise that success cannot always be measured only by the establishment of new degrees. The process itself may also be valuable. Look at the Palestinian areas: the project itself requires cooperation internationally and nationally, it demands transparency – the process itself has the potential to be very valuable. If we had a hundred per cent success rate, we may not have had sufficient risk involved, and we would not need such a programme.”

The global dialogue

What role does higher education play in a country’s development? “Higher education is needed to reach the Millennium Development Goals. Higher education is linked to economic growth, democracy, health, critical thinking and global challenges like climate change. And higher education is linked to education at all levels. Without

higher education I believe the idea of quality primary education for all is impossible to achieve. Higher education institutions have an important role to play in the development of society, firstly in the form of the knowledge they produce, secondly in the process of educating people, and thirdly in communicating the knowledge to society at large. All these three parts are very important. Higher education institutions also have an international role to play. They have to be part of the global dialogue. All countries should be able to take part in this dialogue of deciding what is important knowledge. All countries need to contribute to the global knowledge base.”

Ten per cent of the budget for development assistance in Norway goes to education. How much of this goes to higher education? “Twenty per cent.”

Is this sufficient? “You will not get the Director of Education and Research to say this is sufficient, but Norway is one of the countries that puts the most emphasis on higher education. I work in this field because I think education and research are important elements, both the knowledge product, the process and the dissemination of the results, but I do not think it is necessarily more important than everything else. We must also be aware of the dangers. Higher education and research can be very important instruments in development and in promoting human rights, but it can also be used to promote hatred, ignorance and discrimination.”

Risks and results

How do you evaluate higher education as development assistance compared to other areas of assistance concerning sustainability, democracy and corruption? Would you say that higher education is a more “secure” form of development assistance? “No, I do not think so. I think you always need to focus on the risks and on the results – there are risks in development assistance for higher education as well, both concerning finances and other aspects, and we must not believe that this sector is apolitical. It is not.”

NOMA has been evaluated and will not continue in its present form. Can you say something about the road ahead? “We will take with us the positive aspects of NOMA, like the reciprocity, that the motivation is cooperation and not development assistance, but both parties’ motivation must be taken seriously. We have to look at what the national strategies in the developing countries are, and then look at whether the initiative for cooperation should come from individual researchers, the institutions or the countries’ expressed needs. We will probably open for all levels of higher education and include institutional capacity development.”

How will you meet the criticism from Norwegian institutions concerning finances? “One possibility is to have fewer projects which are financed better, or to have a thematic or geographical focus. This way we can more easily support the Norwegian and national political priorities. Another possibility is to look at synergies with other programmes. The NUFU and NOMA programmes, or rather the best components of each of them, will probably be merged into one.”

When will this new programme come into effect? “It depends on the funding, but hopefully in 2011.”
After one period of NOMA funding the Master’s degree in political science at the University of Malawi now stands firmly on its own feet.

The Master’s degree is the first in the NOMA portfolio to continue without further funding. From now on the students will have to finance the studies themselves. But Dr Asiyati Chiweza, the project coordinator in Malawi, is optimistic on behalf of the programme’s sustainability.

“We have managed to admit 15 new students on a full fee paying basis. They have taken jobs and teaching commenced in November 2010,” she says.

One reason why the programme has become so well established so quickly, Norwegian coordinator Professor Lars Svåsand believes, is that the academics involved already knew each other from a previous NUFU project.

When the NOMA Master’s degree in political science was launched in 2007 it attracted a large number of applicants. Students came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Anti-Corruption Bureau, media institutions, local government, civic society organisations and from the University of Malawi. Students who have graduated have done very well. “Some candidates received job offers even before they had finished their degrees.”

Challenges and advantages

The Norwegian project coordinator sees several challenges in sustaining the degree.

“There are challenges in terms of the degree itself, at the university and in the university system in the country. For one, it will have to be scaled down. It was an enormous load to take on 20 students two years in a row. Also, the institute does not have access to academic periodicals and books, something we see as an absolute necessity. Secondly, the University of Malawi recently raised tuition fees by 220 per cent. If the university carries out this plan, it is difficult to see how it will not impact the number of applicants. Thirdly, the government has put forward a very ambitious plan to build five new universities. If the cost of running these universities is to be taken from the total budget for higher education, it will make it difficult for the existing university.”

But he also finds promising aspects.

“There are two PhD candidates about to finish and return to the institute, which will strengthen capacity.” He also sees it as a great advantage that the cooperating academics also initiated a new NUFU project at the same time. NUFU and NOMA draw benefits from each other. And finally, the degree itself has proven to be of high quality. The institute in Malawi has followed up the students closely. “I am impressed, especially by Dr Chiweza’s efforts. She has put a lot into making this work,” Svåsand says.

No extra capacity

It was the Norwegian partner’s decision not to extend the project for another year that made the University of Malawi take on the whole programme by itself after only four years of NOMA support.

Sitting here behind my desk in Bergen I would never even have been close to gaining the same knowledge.

Svåsand admits it was a difficult decision. “It was not because of lack of interest, but we just do not have the extra capacity required to do it. Costs at our institute at the University of Bergen were far too high,” he says.

“The timeframe should have been longer from the outset, and we need more compensation for the time we put into it. It is also extremely important that the projects are not dependent on individuals. If there had been a change of personnel in our project, it would have collapsed.”

His Excellency the life President

Malawi is a young democracy. It was only in 1994, the same year as South Africa, that the country gained freedom from the 20-year long de facto dictatorship of Hastings Kamuzu Banda. The dictator, who died in 1997 at the disputed age of 101, was a medical doctor educated in England. He spent 33 years away from his home country, and only returned a few years before independence.

Banda had total control over the country and its people. There were informers everywhere. Anybody risked being arrested, tortured and even killed. Banda is infamous for threatening his enemies by saying he would “feed them to the crocodiles”. Portraits of him could be found everywhere – always hung higher than any other wall hangings. Schoolchildren had to stand next to the road and salute the president when he was travelling, even if it was in the middle of the night.

“But Banda lost, and agreed to step down from power. “Malawi’s history as a dictatorship still weighs heavily in people’s consciousness.”

Celebrated dictator

But – at the same time, the dictator is also celebrated, at least at an official level. In 2006 a huge mausoleum was opened in the capital Lilongwe. The airport continues to be named after him, and so is a major highway in Blantyre.

“I have come to know more and more about Malawi, but I wonder if I understand more,” Svåsand ponders.

“I guess it is because Banda was also associated with independence from colonialism, that he is the ‘father’ of the nation.”

The continued interest in the dictator may also have something to do with the fact that things are not going particularly well on the political scene in the country.

“During the first years with a multi-party system things went pretty well, but lately it has come to a standstill and even recession. The new party, called the Democratic Progressive Party, which the President Bingu wa Mutharika founded, is far from democratic and hardly politically progressive.” Svåsand says.

“The good thing is that the judiciary seems to be independent and has ruled in accordance with the constitution and against the ruling power.”

Professor Svåsand says that being involved in this NOMA project, as well as the NUFU projects, has given him a unique opportunity to get to know another political context.

“Sitting here behind my desk in Bergen I would never even have been close to gaining the same knowledge and access to politics and politicians in Malawi.”
We were driving along the Colombo-Matara road, which lies parallel to the railway on one side and the great ocean on the other. Our destination was the University of Ruhuna, situated about 160 kilometers from Colombo, the capital city of Sri Lanka. As we passed the fishing village of Weligama, we could see fishing boats, hundreds of them lined up with their nets at the sandy beach. The smell of fresh fish was tempting.

My colleague, while attempting to capture the pictorial surroundings through the windows of the fast moving vehicle, asked: “Is Sri Lanka self-sufficient in sea fish?” The outspoken driver of our vehicle volunteered to answer the question before I did.

“Why not, what’s the point in having a country surrounded by the ocean if it doesn’t have fish? But during the war,” he added, “we had to import sea fish. Economic activity in the north east came to a standstill for more than three decades due to the war. We import tinned fish even now.”

“Really? It sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it?”

Breathtaking surroundings

The focus of our conversation then shifted towards the economy and development of the country. The subjects of civil war, tsunami disaster, corruption, inefficiency of management formed part of the discussion and provided a good introduction to our visit to the University of Ruhuna (UR) to inquire about the Master of Science degree programme in Development Management.

After a five-hour long journey we finally reached our destination. The breathtaking surroundings of the university relieved our fatigue and refreshed our minds. We received a warm welcome from Professor Danny Atapattu, the Head of the Department of Economics, who also coordinates the MSc in Development Management.

“The NOMA programme is unique to the postgraduate field in Sri Lanka. UR runs another programme funded by NOMA, the Masters Programme in Peace and Conflict Management. But this is a traditional taught course unlike the programme in Development Management,” said Professor Atapattu.

In this programme, learning, instruction and supervision take place online through the ‘Fronter’ Learning Management System. Students undertake group work, assignments and discussions online. Each group consists of Norwegian, Sri Lankan and African students. The whole group meets only on two occasions. However, the entire student group works together via the Internet. Actually this programme is similar to studying abroad. But it is more demanding since it differs from the traditional classroom learning system.”

A modern teaching approach

In Professor Atapattu’s opinion the education system in universities in the country takes a conservative approach. Students attend lectures, take notes, study the notes and get through exams. “I personally feel that this system of education is outdated and unproductive. It does not create space for liberal academics to emerge. The best thing which happened to the university under this programme was that it helped to improve the quality of teaching of our staff.”

Prominence is given to the employees of the existing academic staff when candidates are nominated. All the three candidates who were selected from the UR for the NOMA scholarship in the 2007–2009 cohort were junior lecturers. After successfully completing the degree all of them were retained on the academic staff in the capacity of permanent lecturers.
Our universities. This degree is the first to fall into that category. I am happy to be part of this," Professor Atapattu states.

Mr Gunasinghe said he previously focused only on quantitative research methods, but being exposed to fields such as poverty, information technology, human geography and environmental management has been immensely helpful in analysing the root causes of the development issues in his country.

NOMA expects UR to upgrade the programme and sustain it by establishing their own Master's degree in 2013 when NOMA funding will end. NOMA has provided relevant resources and facilities to the university. Among them is a resource centre equipped with computers and broadband internet connectivity. Every NOMA-sponsored student is given a laptop computer free of charge.

Focus on gender equality
A significant aspect of the NOMA degree is its emphasis on gender equality. So far more female than male students have enrolled. Women often face a lot of obstacles to go abroad for higher education due to strong family obligations. Under this programme, NOMA expects an equal number of female and male students to graduate.

Mrs Ariyaratne is very concerned about women’s development issues in the war-stricken villages in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka. She wants to contribute to the development of small-scale self-employment of women in the war-torn border villages.

Online group discussions
Mr Gunasinghe and Mrs Ariyaratne were speaking eagerly about the self-learning aspect of the programme. "Getting used to this new system was a challenge. But once we got used to it we could work more freely and build more self-confidence. Earlier, a 2000-word essay was a big trial. Now, writing an analytical essay on a given topic is never an issue. We learned to look at issues from different viewpoints, and the output from online discussions with other foreign students greatly helped in this regard," Mrs Ariyaratne said.

According to Mr Gunasinghe, Sri Lankan students are unable to access the online library of the University of Agder. This is a big disadvantage for the Sri Lankan students. He insisted that it is pertinent to resolve this issue; otherwise it will be difficult for the Sri Lankan students to access the recommended reading.

Although we lived on separate continents, we hardly felt the distance to our fellow students in our online discussion sessions.

On certain occasions Mrs Ariyaratne and Mr Gunasinghe had to stay at the university until midnight to take part in online group discussions because of the time difference. "Getting the whole group to the discussion at the same time was like a hunting game. Sometimes it gave me a sense of adventure!" Mr Gunasinghe laughed, recollecting his experience of staring at the computer screen waiting for other group members to appear online.

"A Norwegian student told me that she felt we were working around the same table. Although we lived on separate continents, we hardly felt the distance to our fellow students in our online discussion sessions."

Tanzanian host families
The second face-to-face session was scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka. But by 2008, the civil war in Sri Lanka had intensified with heavy fighting. Therefore it was decided to hold it at the University of Muzumbe in Tanzania. Each student was expected to conduct their field research while staying with a host family. "During our stay in Tanzania we were staying at a rural village near the Kilimanjaro mountain," said Mrs Ariyaratne.

"Did you climb the mountain?"
"No! They charge foreigners 1000 USD to climb the mountain. We couldn’t afford it."

"Now Tanzania is like a neighbouring country for us. We have good friends there. Some day we will visit Tanzania and climb Mount Kilimanjaro," said Mr Gunasinghe.

Mr Gunasinghe says that his views on the African continent changed after interacting with students from Africa. He sees a lot of similarities between development issues in Sri Lanka and Africa.

Dialogue with policymakers
Mr Gunasinghe feels that there should be a dialogue between the policymakers and university academics. And research reports should not be hidden on library shelves. Mr Gunasinghe’s postgraduate thesis dealt with the failure of poverty alleviation programmes in Sri Lanka. He had already submitted his research findings and recommendations to the relevant ministries of the government and often writes to newspapers and journals on various development issues.

As the sun set, we bid farewell to Mr Gunasinghe and Mrs Ariyaratne and left the university. The two former NOMA students prove that universities indeed produce vibrant citizens for the nation. If they are given the opportunity and support, there is no doubt that they will turn into promising intellectuals.

As we drove past the deep blue ocean, we felt that this island will someday export its own tinned fish to countries across the ocean.
Ingebjørg Støfring has just completed four years as Norway’s ambassador to Bangladesh. Recently she moved to Zimbabwe to work at the Norwegian embassy in Harare.

Støfring closely followed the development of the four NOMA Master’s degrees in Bangladesh during her time as ambassador. According to her, the embassy itself has benefited from the process.

"NOMA has broadened our network. Through NOMA we established contacts in the fields of journalism, social medicine, public health and civil engineering. It is obvious that when one of the NOMA programme coordinators suddenly became one of the advisers to the chief adviser during the last caretaker government it opened up new doors for the embassy."

**Facilitators**

Støfring says that the embassy’s role in establishing these degrees has been to facilitate the process.

"NOMA promotes Norway as an education nation. At every programme opening I have attended there has been good media coverage. Since NOMA courses are also offered to other countries in the region, and invitations have therefore been extended to students from countries such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan, I have often found myself with ambassadors from these countries in Dhaka. This has definitely contributed to stronger relations with Norway."

Støfring finds the regional dimension of NOMA very important.

"South Asia is a region with many conflicts and has everything to gain from closer cooperation. NOMA stimulates such cooperation. Bangladesh is perhaps the most peaceful country in the region. The students from neighbouring countries who come to study in Bangladesh can learn a lot from Bangladesh and will be important actors in regional cooperation when they return to their countries and institutions."

**Something to offer**

What is your impression of the cooperation between the Bangladesh and Norwegian institutions?

"It seems to me that all the programmes work very well. Cooperation with institutions outside Bangladesh has given recognition to the four academic institutions under the NOMA programme, which means a lot, both in terms of capacity building and attracting more students."

Which position does Norway enjoy as an education and research nation?

"When the Bangladeshi institutions enter into such cooperation it is because Norway has something to offer which they cannot find elsewhere. For example, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is a leader in the field of oil and gas, and is highly regarded by Bangladesh and very important for building capacity in this field."

**Key to development**

Støfring comes from the small village of Jølster in Western Norway. She is one of six siblings. Her mother only received basic schooling and had a burning wish for her children to move on to higher education. Three of the children did go into higher education, Støfring being one of them with a Master’s degree in development studies.

"I think all parents, no matter if they come from Jølster or from remote areas of Bangladesh, have a burning desire for their children to enter into higher education because they know how important it is."

What role does higher education play in a nation’s development?

"A well educated population is a key to development. You need a high quality educational system from primary school to higher education that works – that gives people opportunities. Take a look at our own country: we have a strong state and a strong civic society, two very important pillars in any nation. In Bangladesh civic society has played an important role, it has been almost stronger than the state. But at the end of the day you need a strong state as well. You may have all the policies in place but if you have weak institutions you have nobody to implement them and to monitor progress. Through well functioning institutions you will have good governance and good development."

South Asia is a region with many conflicts and has everything to gain from closer cooperation. NOMA stimulates such cooperation. The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) is a leader in the field of oil and gas, and is highly regarded by Bangladesh and very important for building capacity in this field. This has definitely contributed to stronger relations with Norway."

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South Asia is a region with many conflicts and has everything to gain from closer cooperation. NOMA stimulates such cooperation.
“NOMA is not only a cooperation initiative; it also gives us tremendous development prospects,” says Professor Mohammed Tamim of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (BUET).

Bangladesh’s petroleum and mineral resources are considered to have huge potential but, because of the acute shortage of human capital, it has so far had difficulties carrying out surveying, as well as exploration and production of these resources. Today the industry is, for the large part, operated and run by people with little knowledge of petroleum engineering. Typically, mechanical and chemical engineers fill the gaps.

Professor Tamim is the coordinator of the NOMA Master of Science programme within the petroleum sector in Asia and Africa. “For us, participation is not only contributing human resources but is also creating important academic liaisons,” says the professor and Bangladesh petroleum expert.

Even if just 40 per cent of the NOMA students came back to serve their country, it would bring great benefits.

Since the department’s inception, it has been observed that students usually do not come back to Bangladesh after completing their degree abroad. According to Professor Tamim, the brain drain issue was addressed while designing this NOMA Master’s programme by joint consensus of all the partner institutions.

“We set certain conditions for enrolment so that students are bound to return home and serve their country for at least two years. Even if just 40 per cent of the NOMA students came back to serve their country, it would bring great benefits.”

Farhana Akter is the only female student from Bangladesh who has enrolled in NOMA’s petroleum study programme since its inception in 2007. She joined the Master’s programme after completing her Bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET). It became an “eye-opener.”

“The NOMA programme has sharpened my knowledge and greatly improved my level of confidence,” Akter says. She works as an assistant professor at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, one of the top public universities in Bangladesh.

She describes studying in Norway as one of the biggest events in her life. Very few women pursue higher education in Bangladesh and, typically, engineering studies are highly male-dominated.

“But now Bangladeshi society is gradually changing and women are moving out of stereotypical roles in every sphere.”

NOMA projects by country 2006-2014

**Angola**

**ARHEI - Angolan Norwegian Higher Education Initiative**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2006/10002
- Main partners: Agostinho Neto University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Additional partner: University of Oslo
- Total allocation: NOK 6 290 185

**Bangladesh**

**Integrated Masters Programs (M.Phil.) in Public Health Research in Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, India and Pakistan)**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2006/10011
- Main partners: Bangladesh Institute of Health Sciences, University of Oslo
- Additional partners: Baquai Medical University, Kathmandu University, Ministry of Health
- Total allocation: NOK 11 832 554

**Joint regional programme for Master degree in journalism, media and communication**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2007/10053
- Main partners: University of Dhaka, Oslo University College
- Additional partner: College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of the Punjab
- Total allocation: NOK 5 664 682

**Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG)**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2007/10042
- Main partners: North South University, University of Bergen
- Additional partner: Tribhuvan University
- Total allocation: NOK 8 981 000

**MSc-sandwich program within the petroleum sector in Asia and Africa**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2006/10028
- Main partners: Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Additional partner: University of Stavanger
- Total allocation: NOK 11 030 701

**Bolivia**

**Master in Educational Technologies and Digital Resources (M.Ed. Tech.)**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2010/13648
- Main partners: Universidad Privada del Valle, University of Bergen
- Additional partner: CO-Universidad EAFIT
- Category: Multilateral master programmes, project period: 2010- 2014
- Total allocation: 5 171 875

**Egypt**

**MSC in International Transport and Logistics for East Africa**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2007/10050
- Main partners: Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport, Molde University College
- Additional partner: University of Dar-es-Salaam
- Total allocation: NOK 9 000 000

**Ethiopia**

**Masters programme: Urban development and urban challenges in East Africa**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2007/10054
- Main partners: Addis Ababa University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- Additional partner: University of Oslo
- Total allocation: NOK 4 655 000

**MASTMO - MSc Programme in Mathematical and Statistical Modelling**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2007/10048
- Partners: Universidad Privada del Valle, University of Bergen
- Total allocation: NOK 4 501 416

**Indonesia**

**Graduate program in Democracy Studies**

- **Project id:** NOMA-2006/10007
- Main partners: Gadjah Mada University, University of Oslo
- Total allocation: NOK 11 091 429
Malawi
Health and Information Systems - Two integrated programmes at the University of Malawi
Project id: NOMA-2007/10045
Partners: University of Malawi, University of Oslo
Total allocation: NOK 8 650 000

Master of Arts in Political Science at the University of Malawi
Project id: NOMA-2006/10017
Partners: University of Malawi, University of Bergen
Total allocation: NOK 4 441 546

Mozambique
Applied Marine Sciences for Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in Mozambique
Project id: NOMA-2007/10044
Main partners: Eduardo Mondlane University, University of Bergen
Total allocation: NOK 6 711 494

Nepal
Master of Engineering in Electrical Power Engineering
Project id: NOMA-2007/10039
Partners: Kathmandu University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Total allocation: NOK 8 294 200

Master Program in Environment Education and Sustainable Development
Project id: NOMA-2007/10037
Main partners: Kathmandu University, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Additional partners: University of Dhaka, Kathmandu University, Oslo University College
Total allocation: NOK 8 193 157

Master program in Sustainable Water and Sanitation, Health and Development
Project id: NOMA-2007/10044
Main partners: Tribhuvan University, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Additional partners: COMSATS Institute of Information Technology
Total allocation: NOK 8 893 056

Master programme in Conflict, Peace building and Development
Project id: NOMA-2006/10019
Main partners: Tribuwan University, Norwegian University of Life Sciences
Additional partners: University of Ruhuna, Eastern University, Tribhuvan University
Total allocation: NOK 11 928 570

MSc Programme in Hydropower Development
Project id: NOMA-2006/10030
Partners: Tribhuvan University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Total allocation: NOK 6 486 649

Regional Master program in Biodiversity and Environmental Management
Project id: NOMA-2007/10036
Main partners: Tribhuvan University, University of Bergen
Additional partners: Kumaun University
Total allocation: NOK 8 407 250

Master of Science in Technology and Innovation Management - Nepal
Project id: NOMA-2010/13643
Main partners: Tribhuvan University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Category: Multilateral master programmes, project period: 2010-2014
Total allocation: 4 500 000

Nicaragua
Master Programme in Intercultural Communication and Media Studies
Project id: NOMA-2010/13431
Main partners: University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, Oslo University College
Category: Bilateral master programmes, project period: 2010-2014
Total allocation: 3 593 700

Palestinian areas
Community Psychology Master Program at Birzeit University
Project id: NOMA-2007/10055
Main partners: Birzeit University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Additional partner: Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Total allocation: NOK 5 665 480

South Africa
Strengthens and Deliver Cooperative Masters Level Programmes in Higher Education Studies
Project id: NOMA-2006/10034
Main partners: University of the Western Cape, University of Oslo
Additional partners: Makerere University, University of the Western Cape
Total allocation: NOK 12 000 000

Tanzania
Integrated Masters in Health Informatics - Tanzania and Ethiopia
Project id: NOMA-2006/10001
Main partners: University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of Oslo
Additional partners: Addis Ababa University, University of Gondar (Gondar College of Medical Sciences, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Addis Ababa University
Total allocation: NOK 11 914 021

Tanzania
Integrated Masters in Health Informatics - Tanzania and Ethiopia
Project id: NOMA-2006/10001
Main partners: University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of Oslo
Additional partners: Addis Ababa University, University of Gondar (Gondar College of Medical Sciences, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Addis Ababa University
Total allocation: NOK 11 530 299

Master Programme in Health Policy and Management
Project id: NOMA-2006/10002
Partners: Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences, University of Bergen
Additional partners: University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of the Western Cape, University of Oslo
Total allocation: NOK 10 283 399

Sandwich programme for M Med and M Sc degrees in clinical medicine
Project id: NOMA-2006/10003
Main partners: Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences, University of Bergen
Additional partners: Addis Ababa University, Christian Medical Centre
Total allocation: NOK 11 897 099

Southern African Masters Programme in Mathematical Modelling
Project id: NOMA-2007/10057
Main partners: University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of Oslo
Additional partners: University of Cape Town, University of Botswana, University of Pretoria, University of Zambia, University of Malawi, Eduardo Mondlane University, University of Witwatersrand, University of Zimbabwe, Makerere University, University of Dar-es-Salaam, University of Zululand, National University of Science and Technology
Total allocation: NOK 8 342 750

Sudan
Development of Master programs in physical and chemical oceanography at Red Sea University, Sudan
Project id: NOMA-2006/10038
Main partners: Red Sea University, University of Bergen
Total allocation: NOK 6 499 000

International Education and Development
Project id: NOMA-2007/10013
Main partners: Afdal University for Women, Oslo University College
Total allocation: NOK 11 914 021
Regional Master in Nursing  
**Project id:** NOMA-2010/13185  
**Main partners:** Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences, Bergen University College  
**Additional partners:** UG-Makerere University, Addis Ababa University, University of Bergen, Bergen University College  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2010-2014  
**Total allocation:** 6 000 000

**Uganda**

**Master Programme in Renewable Energy system**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2006/10021  
**Main partners:** Makerere University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
**Additional partners:** University of Dar-es-Salaam, Eduardo Mondlane University, University of Malawi, Addis Ababa University, Mekelle University, Ethiopia  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2006 - 31.12.2013  
**Total allocation:** NOK 12 000 000

**Master Programme in Vocational Pedagogy Uganda-Southern Sudan-Norway**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2007/10047  
**Main partners:** Kumbogo University, Akershus University College  
**Additional partners:** Upper Nile University  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2007 - 31.12.2013  
**Total allocation:** NOK 8 718 628

**Masters Program in Urban Transformation and Sustainable Development**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2007/10052  
**Main partners:** Makerere University, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design  
**Additional partners:** Addis Ababa University, University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Ardi University  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2007 - 31.12.2013  
**Total allocation:** NOK 6 008 185

**North-South-South Collaborative MSc in Development and Natural Resource Economics**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2006/10031  
**Main partners:** Makerere University, Norwegian University of Life Sciences  
**Total allocation:** NOK 9 000 000

**Develop and deliver cooperative regional Master Programmes in Nutritious, Human Rights and Governance**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2010/13528  
**Main partners:** Makerere University, University of Oslo  
**Additional partners:** UG-Kyambogo University, ZA-Stellenbosch, NO-Akershus University College  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2010-2014  
**Total allocation:** 5 922 759

**Master of Science in Innovation and Industrial Development - Uganda**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2010/12562  
**Main partners:** Makerere University, Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
**Category:** Bilateral master programmes: 2010-2014  
**Total allocation:** 4 500 000

**Vietnam**

**MSc in Fisheries and Aquaculture Management and Economics (FAME)**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2006/10029  
**Main partners:** University of Fisheries, University of Tromso  
**Additional partners:** University of Chittagong, University of Ruhuna, Shanghai Fisheries University  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2006 - 31.12.2013  
**Total allocation:** NOK 11 690 994

**Zambia**

**Master in Education, Literacy and Learning**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2007/10040  
**Main partners:** University of Zambia, Hedmark University College  
**Additional partners:** University of Namibia  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2007 - 31.12.2013  
**Total allocation:** NOK 8 942 062

**Master of Science in Clinical Neuropsychology - Building expertise to deal with the Neuropsychological challenges of HIV-infection**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2007/10046  
**Partners:** University of Zambia, Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
**Total allocation:** NOK 3 505 733

**Master of Science in Epidemiology**  
**Project id:** NOMA-2010/12841  
**Main partners:** University of Zambia, University of Bergen  
**Additional partners:** MW-College of Medicine  
**Category:** Multilateral master programmes: 2010-2014  
**Total allocation:** 6 000 000